

UC-NRLF



B 2 836 945

89-66



THE HOUSEKEEPER;

OR,

THE WHITE ROSE.

BAYLIS AND LEIGHTON,
JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET.

THE HOUSEKEEPER;

OR,

THE WHITE ROSE.

A COMEDY,

IN TWO ACTS.

BY

DOUGLAS JERROLD,

AUTHOR OF

"THE RENT DAY," "NELL GWYNNE," "BLACK-EYED SUSAN,"
"JOHN OVERY," &c. &c.

PERFORMED AT

THE THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET.

LONDON:

JOHN MILLER, HENRIETTA STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

1833.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

"IN 1772," says a history of the reign of George the First, "the partizans of the Pretender began once more to bestir themselves in his favour, in the supposition, doubtless, that the shock produced by the failure of the South Sea project, would be favourable to their designs. The measures of government, however, were so judicious and prompt, that the conspiracy was crushed in embryo. Several noblemen were arrested on suspicion: Bishop Atterbury was exiled for life; but only one person, Christopher Layer, a barrister of the Temple, suffered capital punishment. He was convicted of high treason, in enlisting men for the service of the Pretender."

Layer, it will be seen, is the only real person introduced in the following comedy; the other characters, with the incidents in which they are concerned, being the invention of the writer, who has "taken out" the allowed dramatic license, to fix on an historical circumstance as the means of developing imaginary events. In the practical working of his design, he has been most zealously seconded by *all* employed in the drama. Neither can the writer omit his cordial acknowledgments of the kindness and valuable managerial assistance of Mr. PERCY FARREN.

LITTLE CHELSEA,

D. J.

July 19, 1833.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

<i>Sidney Maynard</i>	MR. VINING.
<i>Tom Purple</i>	MR. BRINDAL.
<i>Simon Box</i>	MR. BUCKSTONE.
<i>Father Oliver</i>	MR. WEBSTER.
<i>Daguerre</i>	MR. GALLOT.
<i>Benjamin</i>	MR. COVENEY.
<i>Laval</i>	MR. W. JOHNSTONE.
<i>Christopher Layer</i>	MR. BARTLETT.
<i>Bin</i>	MR. J. COOPER.
<i>Officer</i>	MR. EATON.
<i>Gentleman</i>	MR. NEWCOMBE.

Soldiers, &c.

WOMEN.

<i>Felicia</i>	MISS TAYLOR.
<i>Sophy Hawes</i>	MRS. HUMBY.
<i>Widow Duckling</i>	MRS. TAYLEURE.

This Comedy was represented for the first time July 17, 1833.

THE HOUSEKEEPER;

OR,

THE WHITE ROSE.

ACT I.—SCENE I.

An old fashioned Apartment, handsomely furnished.

Enter FELICIA and SOPHY HAWES.

FELICIA. I am glad, Sophy, thou hast not forgotten thy old companion.

SOPHY. Dear madam, though it's seven long years since you left us for foreign parts, there's hardly been a day that I hav'n't sometimes thought of you.

FEL. I have not deserved your thoughts, Sophy. I fear me, travel, with its new objects, has made me slight old friends in Derbyshire.

SOPHY. Just what my poor mother told me, madam. She used to say,—Sophy, child, where is the use in fuming and fidgetting? Thou knowest, the lady Felicia, though she was a pretty babe, and thy foster-sister, now she's a woman grown, mus'n't think of folks like us.—So, put such

stuff from thy head, girl. But though I tried, I couldn't quite.

FEL. And thou art come to seek thy fortune in London?—I am rejoiced that my return to England,—

SOPHY. Oh! we heard about your uncle's death, and that you would soon come back.—Your poor uncle!

FEL. My last relative—my last friend, Sophy. I do but visit England to await the settlement of his will, and may after, quit it for ever.

SOPHY. Madam!

FEL. But, Sophy, what am I to think of our Derbyshire bachelors?—Was there not one with wit enough to keep you at home?

SOPHY. He didn't stay at home himself, madam.

FEL. Did he win your love, and then desert you?

SOPHY. He didn't desert me, madam.

FEL. How then?

SOPHY. We were to be married; but folks would meddle. The parson—I dare say he meant well—talked to us of early troubles, and advised us to get money first; and so, poor Simon set off to a place here in London; and—for my part, I don't see what the parson had to do with it; except to marry us, and leave the rest to ourselves.

Enter SERVANT.

SERV. The young man, below, madam, who came with—

SOPHY. That's Simon, my lady—Simon Box: he would come; he said he shouldn't rest if he didn't speak to you.—*(Exit SERVANT.)*—He would come.

Enter SIMON BOX.

SIMON. Your servant, my lady: Sophy is come up all the way from Matlock, to a place here. Now, though the foolish people in Derbyshire said 'twas a rare chance to be house-

keeper in London, yet I—you see, my lady, you and I know what London is.

FEL. I perceive.—You wish to hear something of her mistress?

SIMON. No, my lady: I wish to hear something of her master.

FEL. Master! Do I then know the gentleman?

SIMON. Saving your presence, he hath played so many tricks in his time, 'tis said few know him long. But, as he has now foresworn the world; shut himself close in an old house in St. James's Park; given himself up to study, some say to magic—but we know, my lady, what folks will sometimes call magic;—if you think he'll keep in this staid mind—

FEL. He! Of what strange gentleman do you speak?

SIMON. Of Mr. Sidney Maynard.

SOPHY. Your ladyship's cousin.

FEL. My cousin, Sidney!

SOPHY. Dear heart! isn't your ladyship well?

FEL. I understand, now. Go on, friend.

SIMON. No, madam; I've done.—Come, Sophy.

SOPHY. But won't you hear her ladyship? Isn't Mr. Maynard a true gentleman, madam?

SIMON. Yes,—and a young gentleman. No, Sophy, 'twill never do.

FEL. I will engage for the honour—the integrity of my cousin. Yet, tell me, Sophy; what accident can have selected you for this service?

SOPHY. Why, madam, a letter came down to our curate for somebody to keep your cousin's house.—The widow Duckling was coming; when, somehow, the exciseman made up his mind of a sudden, and was to take her to church,

the day after I came away. As I knew the secret I,—that is, Simon being in London,—no—that is—I came up instead of the widow.

SIMON. And a thoughtless child thou wert. The widow was a discreet, sober, ugly woman of five-and-forty; thou art nineteen, and, what's worse, not a scarecrow.

SOPHY. Well, Simon, every one must have a beginning. And, I'm sure, Mr. Maynard is a gentleman: doesn't madam say as much?

FEL. (*Aside.*) Never was wilder, bolder thought, and yet I'll follow it! Love, all but hopeless, will have me venture all!

SIMON. No, Sophy: doubts come thicker on me—thou sha'n't go. If her ladyship, as I am out of service, could have given thee or me, or both of us, a nook in her own family,—but to keep house for a strange young man!

FEL. I pray, for a short time, let the trial be made. You cannot doubt Sophy—should not doubt me. If, after a time—say two or three weeks—she'd quit such service, I will befriend ye both.

SIMON. Will a week do? Well, be it as your ladyship likes. I know that her mother nursed you and her;—that, for many a day, you were like little sisters together.—So, you can't but have a kind of love for the girl, and so—I'll trust you. Come, Sophy, I'll take you to the Park.

FEL. I will see her there. Yet, for further satisfaction, 'twould be well you waited on Mr. Maynard to acquaint him of Sophy's coming.

SIMON. To be sure.—(*aside.*) I can then scan my gentleman: I'll look him through and through; and if I spy a flaw, she sha'n't go—no, I'll run in debt for marriage fees, and we'll starve together. (*Exit.*)

SOPHY. I knew Mr. Maynard must be the same nice young gentleman he was, when, eight years ago, he saved your ladyship from drowning.

FEL. He is, as I hear.

SOPHY. What! ar'n't you friends?

FEL. I have seen him—and at long intervals—but twice since he saved my life; and then, as I believe, he neither saw me nor knew of my presence. A family dispute, arising from political opinions, has made us strangers. And now, child, attend to me. Sophy, I am sure thou dost love me?

SOPHY. As I love breath, madam.

FEL. Wouldst do any honest thing to serve me?

SOPHY. I'd almost lay down my life for you.

FEL. And, if I trust thee, thou wilt keep a secret?

SOPHY. As I'd keep the half of a love sixpence.

FEL. Then come with me, Sophy. I have a trial for thy love: it may be, as accidents fall out, a hard one.—Yet, be faithful, Sophy; and doubt not of a full return. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.

An Apartment in Maynard's House.

Enter MAYNARD and PURPLE.

PURPLE. Never think it, Sidney; 'tish't in mortal flesh of eight-and-twenty. Thou wilt grow tired of this thy hermitage, ere thou canst grace it with as much beard as an oyster.

MAYNARD. Well, time tells a tale.

PURP. What end dost thou propose to this new whim? What dost thou seek?

MAYN. I have told thee—wisdom.

PURP. Pshaw! true wisdom's a gypsy, and pitches her tent by the highways.—Seek her in the court, the camp, the tavern, aye, the gaming-house; but stay not at home,—for, depend on't, wisdom will never knock at thy gate.

MAYN. I shall woo her to me by science,—contemplation.

PURP. Impossible; the ghosts won't let thee. Smile; the ghosts of—thy former days. I'll fancy thee here of winter nights, walled in by books—philosophers and sages in their sickly vellum. Well! thou canst not study: 'tis true, thou hast before thee a treatise writ in deep Chaldee; but, canst thou read? Do not spectres of thy past life come between thee and the book? Are not silks rustling in the air—delicate feet tripping over the boards—do not thy bookshelves change to tapestried walls—nay, doth not the very death-watch in the wainscoat quit its dull tick-tick,—and, to thy fancy, strike into a jig?

MAYN. To thine, Tom; for thy fancy would turn a mummy to a Daphne.

PURP. I thank my fancy! Thou'lt be astrologer, too?—Wilt catch colds and chilblains searching the skies?—I warrant me, Sid, thou'lt make rare discoveries in the milky way.—Thou'lt see no misshapen things; but caps, ribbons, gowns and petticoats of a distracting cut. Of all men, thou art least fit for this. Why, thou'lt never rightly see the man in the moon.

MAYN. Humph! Why not?

PURP. Because to thee he'll ever seem a woman. 'Tis plain thou'rt not in earnest; else thou'dst gone into some cave or ruin, and not have set up hermit within ear-shot of the court.

MAYN. Have I not said, 'twas father Oliver's covenant with me, ere we quitted Paris, that we should dwell in London?

PURP. Aye; he'd fain tell the fortunes of the maids of honour, and cast the nativities of pet spaniels.

MAYN. Wilt never be serious? Father Oliver is a man profound research, most curious knowledge: are not his looks—?

PURP. Most reverend. His hair is long and sleek; his face, unruffled as a dish of cream; and, for his voice, no flute hath a softer delivery. Oh! doubtless, he is wise!

MAYN. There's not a science hidden from him.

PURP. It may be—(*Aside.*) that of picking locks included.

MAYN. He can read the heavens.

PURP. Certainly—(*Aside.*) after his own alphabet.

MAYN. Hath studied antiquities.

PURP. The most ancient—(*Aside.*) for credulity was the first-born of Adam.

MAYN. In fine, he is learned in all things; from a constellation to a plant.

PURP. The mountebank's true circle of knowledge; for they who huckster with the stars, often end their learning with hempseed.

MAYN. Well, thou wert born for idle talk, and dost but fulfil thy destiny. Talk on—I am fixed in my new purpose. I have thrown away ten good years in twenty foolish courses. I have tried all, save study, and found all vain. And now, I am almost thirty—warning thirty.

PURP. Warning thirty!

MAYN. 'Tis half the journey, Tom. Depend on't, after thirty, 'tis time to count the mile-stones.

PURP. I never was good at a reckoning—count for us both.

Here comes sleek wisdom,—Father Oliver. Farewell ; for here I am as one of the profane.

Enter FATHER OLIVER.

OLIVER. I crave your pardon, sir—I did conceive you were alone.

PURP. Nay, let me spoil no conjuration—I am gone.—
(*Returning.*) Oh, Maynard, is the woman yet arrived?

OLIV. A woman!—here?

PURP. A woman—and here ;—and why not?

MAYN. An old dame from the country.—Without a housekeeper the place seems dull and starved.

OLIV. Certainly : and yet Benjamin is apt, vigilant, and faithful. Have we need of other help?

PURP. Need ! Live in a palace, yet without a petticoat, 'tis but a place to shiver in. Whereas, take off the house-top—break every window—make the doors creak—the chimnies smoke—give free entry to sun, wind, and rain,—still will a petticoat make the hovel habitable ; nay, bring the little household gods crowding about the fire-place.

OLIV. (*To MAYNARD.*) Yet here, sir, there is nothing to to be done which Benjamin—

PURP. Benjamin ! Tut ! a sage is a fool to an old woman. Can Benjamin cure coughs, darn hose, make possets ? Is he learned in flannel—doth he know what water-gruel is ? What ! dwell in this huge carcass of a house, without some comfortable woman to give it warmth and life ? No—I have followed my own counsel ; written to my old college friend, in Derbyshire, for a staid, plain, elderly widow ; a simple-minded soul, innocent of London craft. Doubtless, she'll soon arrive ;—and then—then, father Wisdom !—

OLIV. What then, sir ?

PURP. Then, we'll have a housewarming shall make the

roof quake. But, Sid, to return to the matter that brought me here. Why wilt not make one of us to-night? Nay, for one night leave this den of melancholy and come among us. We shall have rich sport.

MAYN. I have said, it is impossible. I am making certain calculations, and to-night Venus will appear—

PURP. I know she will;—then why not come and meet her? Not your Venus, twinkling coldly thousands of miles away; but a Venus, eye to eye—hand to hand; young, blooming—well, I see 'tis vain. Thou'rt for celestial graces; I'm for solid love on *terra firma*: I'd ogle for myself, thou'dst woo through a telescope; and so I leave thee for my Venus with kindling looks, to thy Venus and the rheumatism. (*Exit.*)

OLIV. Will the gentleman be frequent in his visits?

MAYN. No; finding me fixed in my design, he'll leave me to my humour. And I am fixed;—I give up all the vain purposes of life, all its follies and its feuds, for hard, unremitting study.

OLIV. At any time a wise determination.—And to a man of birth and fortune—(*Aside.*)—I'll try him now—who has so many roads to honour,—

MAYN. To what simpletons agree to call honour.

OLIV. At a time like the present, in the contest about to commence—

MAYN. Contest?—

OLIV. It may be but a rumour—yet it was whispered in Paris,—

MAYN. What was whispered?

OLIV. That king James—I mean the chevalier,—

MAYN. The Pretender as he is called?

OLIV. As he is called,—would make another venture for the English crown. This was said.

MAYN. But what says his majesty, king George the First? Another venture?

(*Enter BENJAMIN.*)

Well, sir?

BENJAMIN. A woman is below—a woman from Derbyshire: she says to keep the house.

MAYN. Let her come up.

OLIV. I will send her to you.—(*Aside.*) No, we cannot count on him. Well, as he will not work with us, he shall, spite of himself, work for us.—(*Exit.*)

BEN. I kept father Oliver's house in Paris: he said I was to keep your house here. I don't understand—

MAYN. If you'd quit your place, the doors are open. If you'd still keep it, learn better manners. Send the woman to me.

BEN. (*Aside.*) She'll spoil all, now: and yet, if she's curious, she'd better staid in Derbyshire than come near Benjamin. (*Exit.*)

MAYN. (*Sits.*) Yes, I am sure I have done wisely. In good time have I turned from the dissipation and frivolity of life, to seek in true wisdom—

Re-enter BENJAMIN.

BEN. Here's the woman.

MAYN. Very well. (*BENJAMIN shews on FELICIA, drest as a country-girl. BENJAMIN goes off.*)—In true wisdom, the only lasting good. All else is hollow. Glory! 'tis but a bubble blown from blood. Law! a spider's wisdom: and politics! the stateman ponders and plans, winning nothing certain but ingratitude and the indigestion. Whilst for woman! we hunt a wild-fire and vow it is a star. I have done with these vanities. Woman!—I' faith I had forgotten my housekeeper. Now, for a face with a decent sprinkling

of wrinkles—a skin of parchment, wherein time hath left a memorandum of comeliness—a few silver hairs—a quiet, grandmotherly eye—four teeth at the most, and a back like a bow. Such should be the handmaid of a philosopher, and such—(*Rising and seeing FELICIA*)—My dear,—my—why, young, pretty and—are you from the skies?

FEL. No, sir ; Derbyshire.

MAYN. This is some mistake. Are you sure I am the person ? To whom were you sent ?

FEL. To a steady, respectable, studious gentleman. Perhaps, I've been misdirected ?

MAYN. Oh ! you must have come to the wrong house.

FEL. Do you think so, sir ?

MAYN. That is, possibly there may be another steady gentleman in the neighbourhood ; but I doubt whether he is—

FEL. (*Shewing card.*) “ Mr. Sidney Maynard, Birdcage Walk, St. James's Park ? ”

MAYN. My name and address, certainly, but—(*Aside.*)—she's very pretty !

FEL. I thought I was right, sir.

MAYN. Yes, child, but—(*Aside.*) pretty !—she's beautiful. But tell me, if—if—(*Aside*) I feel I'm becoming a philosopher, for a blooming wench makes a fool of me. Tell me ; how long have you lost your husband ?

FEL. Lost ! I've not begun to lose, yet.

MAYN. Not begun to lose ?

FEL. I never had the care of one.

MAYN. The person named to me was in her widowhood.

FEL. Yes, sir ; but she has since grown out of it.

MAYN. Why, child, do you talk riddles ? What has happened to the woman ?

FEL. A second husband, sir.

MAYN. If so, I must make the best of my disappointment.

FEL. I'm sure, sir, it sha'n't be my fault if anything's amiss.

MAYN. Your fault? You say the widow is married; well, what do you wish?

FEL. To take her place, sir.

MAYN. What! be my housekeeper? Live in this place—in such a house?

FEL. It's a very nice house, sir; and when put a bit to rights—

MAYN. But, my dear girl, your reputation—you don't know the dangers, the deceits of London?

FEL. Oh, don't I?—I've had a lesson I shall never forget.

MAYN. Already?

FEL. See here, sir—(*Shewing a ring on her finger.*)

MAYN. Well, I see—a ring.

FEL. 'Twas picked up in the street only an hour ago by, as I thought, a good old soul, who offered me her share in it—for she said it was part mine—for half the money in my pocket.

MAYN. A good beginning. Why, thou hast spent half thy fortune on pieces of red and white glass.

FEL. But then I have bought wisdom will serve me in all hazards.

MAYN. What, in the ring?

FEL. Yes: for when gentlemen say fine things to me—call my lips rubies, and my eyes diamonds, I shall turn from them and look here at my bits of glass.

MAYN. Very well. But some may talk of marriage?

FEL. Still I shall think of the cheat to-day, and consider if old women are the only ring-droppers.

MAYN. Thou hast a pretty way of turning loss to profit. What's thy name, child?

FEL. Sophia Hawes.

MAYN. Sophia?

FEL. Friends and acquaintance call me Sophy.

MAYN. Sophy? (*Aside.*) This is the oddest adventure—but, no, 'twill never do. A student with a Hebe for a house-keeper;—and why not? 'Tis rashness to seek temptation—yet cowardice to fly from it. Besides, there is so much singularity in the affair, and the girl is so innocent, and so—so pretty—that, until she is settled, I ought, I must, give her house-room. But, Sophia—no, that will never do,—thou must let me call thee Sophy, too?

FEL. And welcome, sir.

MAYN. Tell me, Sophy; do they know in Derbyshire to what place thou art come?

FEL. Nobody, but the widow; and she promised to keep the secret till she was fairly married. I stole away directly, for I did so want to see London!

MAYN. Well, Sophy, for a season at least thou mayest remain. And now, child, (*taking her hand*) attend to me. You must be very diligent.

FEL. I'll never be quiet, sir.

MAYN. Yet, go about without any stir or noise.

FEL. If ever you chance to hear me, you won't know me from a mouse.

MAYN. Never shew any ill temper.

FEL. La, sir! what *is* ill temper?

MAYN. Never come near me in my studies.

FEL. For the live-long day I won't even think of you.

MAYN. Never talk.

FEL. I hate talking.

MAYN. Never—no, I think that winds up the list. These

preliminaries settled, (*still holds her hand.*) give me your hand on——

FEL. *Which* hand, sir?

MAYN. Which? why, both hands. And now, Sophy—
(*Enter BENJAMIN.*)

What do you want?

BEN. There's a man below, come about the bricks from Babylon.

MAYN. I'll come; I'll—Benjamin; henceforth, attend to this person in all things. (*Aside.*) Bricks from Babylon! Faith, just now I am more puzzled by hierographs from Derbyshire. (*Exit.*)

FEL. Benjamin.

BEN. Well?

FEL. Your keys, Benjamin.

BEN. Humph! You are to be my mistress, I suppose?

FEL. Yes, Benjamin: and seeing, Benjamin, that I am entrusted with so rare a jewel, Benjamin, I would fain keep it under lock and key, Benjamin.

BEN. There they are (*giving them. Aside.*) at least, a few of them. Be sure and don't lose any of us. (*Exit.*)

FEL. To what has my fortune—an impulse which I have felt it vain to combat—reduced me? He is generous, kind, good; every look, every word declares it. And yet I wish I had not come—wish—alas! I dare not speak my wish, no not to my own heart, though 'tis well nigh breaking with it. (*Exit.*)

SCENE III.

St. James's Park. View of MAYNARD's House, Bird-cage Walk. Enter SIMON BOX.

SIMON. (*Looking at the house.*) No; I'll not take the trouble to knock—I am satisfied; it's not an honest, straightforward-looking house. There's a grimness about the walls, and the windows don't stare fairly out, but have a leering, squinting look. The very chimnies only seem to stand there for a trick. Sophy sha'n't live there; and I'll back and say so. Stay now; if, to be sure, I could see any of Mr. Maynard's tradesmen; if I could get his character from the butcher or the baker: a good word from his tailor would be better than all.

OLIVER *is seen to come from MAYNARD's house:*

OLIV. It is full time. Layer promised to come or send.

SIMON. Pray, sir, without offence, what do you think of that house?

OLIV. That house! (*Aside.*) Is this a messenger? Why, friend?

SIMON. Nay, sir, I wait for you. A little curious business that—what do you think of that house?

OLIV. (*Aside.*) He seems a simple fool; I may, with little risk, venture the pass-words. I think—(*approaching SIMON; with significance*)—"The white rose is a pretty flower."

SIMON. No question; though some folks have a better liking for the red.

OLIV. Just so.

SIMON. But, sir, don't let us part on colours. (*Exit OLIVER.*) Now, is that a mad gardener or is it—Eh? another.

(Enter DAGUERRE.)

Pray, sir, what do you think of that house?

DAG. That house? (*Aside.*) A new recruit, perhaps.—
What, that house with the white roses in the window?

SIMON. White roses? There's nothing but the curtains,
and they seem—

DAG. Very true. (*Exit.*)

SIMON. Surely, they are curtains.

(Enter LAVAL.)

Kind sir, may a poor man ask your opinion? What do
you think of that house?

LAVAL. That with the weathercock?

SIMON. With the weathercock.

LAV. Of the shape and colour of a—a white rose?

SIMON. No: of the shape and colour of a red fox.

LAV. Very right—a red fox. (*Exit.*)

SIMON. I see; there's some wager a-foot about white
roses. To the next I'll speak roses too. (*Looking off.*) Why,
there they are, talking to that silky looking old gentleman.
And there, another joins them. Now, the two leave, and
the old man and the stranger—their heads close together—
come this way. I'll hang back a little. (*Retires.*)

Enter OLIVER and CHRISTOPHER LAYER.

LAYER. This is the golden time. To-night we must decide.

OLIV. Art sure we are yet strong enough?

LAY. We shall gain no strength by longer delay. All is
ripe in Scotland,—my lads on the Essex coast wait but the
word to rise, and now or never is the time. At what hour
shall we come?

OLIV. Ten.

LAY. The signal?

OLIV. After I have lighted the lamp in the second win-
dow, I will be at the door, and admit all friends.

LAY. The old pass-words, "the white rose is a pretty flower?" Is not your student to be won to us?

OLIV. Let him alone. We must be content with cheating him.

LAY. A cheat indeed! If he knew the scholar Oliver were the agent of king James—if he knew that you had made his house the rendezvous of rebels!

OLIV. The jest lies only in success. Go, and see our friends are punctual.

LAY. Never doubt them. The lamp at the second window—the hour ten—and the pass-words—

OLIV. (*Seeing SIMON come down.*) Hush! (*Exit LAYER.*)

SIMON. Kind sir, the house you were pointing at—the house, that like a white rose on its slender stalk—

OLIV. What of the house?

SIMON. I would fain know its reputation: for I suspect—

OLIV. You do?

SIMON. In fact, I am certain that in that house—

OLIV. Well?

SIMON. A conspiracy is hatching against—

OLIV. Silence.

SIMON. I won't!—A conspiracy against—

OLIV. (*Alarmed.*) Speak not so loud.—Against whom?

SIMON. Against Sophy Hawes!—I know it. A pretty place for a young housekeeper!

OLIV. Oh!—the housekeeper? You know the young woman? Her friend, perhaps?

SIMON. I've got beyond friendship a long time!

OLIV. (*Aside.*) So!—he may rid us of her. To be plain with you, I have heard stories of that house that—but few words will suffice: take the victim away.

SIMON. I thought so.

OLIV. You cannot conceive the riots—the iniquities acted in that house.

SIMON. The villainy shews through the walls. There's a conscience in brick and mortar.

OLIV. Defer not a moment—take the hapless creature away. (*Exit.*)

SIMON. If wisdom hadn't kept the hapless creature away! I wonder what he and his friend were talking of. For once, I wished for long ears—for not a word came to me. As for Sophy, let me see—

Enter SOPHY.

SOPHY. This is so whimsical, I can't help creeping about, looking at the house. How my lady will manage when—(*seeing SIMON.*)—Simon?

SIMON. Sophy; why, what dost here alone?

SOPHY. Alone? I—(*Aside*)—La! I wish I might tell him. Why, I've just stepped out for—for an errand for my master.

SIMON. Master!

SOPHY. Yes: we didn't wait for your coming back; it's all over—I'm settled.

SIMON. You are?

SOPHY. What does the man gape and stare at? I'm settled, I tell you; and there's our house.

SIMON. You don't call that a house?

SOPHY. What does it look like?

SIMON. As I stand here, it looks a great monster; all the windows seem large goggling eyes; the door yawns into a dark, deep mouth, and shows a long throat with, all the way down, fifteen ridges of double teeth!

SOPHY. Simon, you've taken to drinking! I never saw a prettier house; I don't see—

SIMON. I know it—poor soul! Do you see (*pointing off.*)

that swan in the water? It doesn't seem to move a joint,—but, white and without a spot, floats at its own accord?

SOPHY. Pretty creature! and so it does.

SIMON. I doubt not that house, like many more in this town, is a swan house.

SOPHY. A swan house?

SIMON. All white and fair outside, as far as you can see; but then, only think of the black legs that's working out of sight! I have heard such tales of that den!

SOPHY. Tales, Simon!

SIMON. Sixteen young housekeepers since Christmas are a few.

SOPHY. Sixteen! And all had warning?

SIMON. Warning! Five were driven to poison; three are in a madhouse; two made a rash use of their garters; and that piece of water has been dragged for the bodies of the other six; but—

SOPHY. But what, Simon?

SIMON. Not one has ever come to hand.

SOPHY. (*Aside.*) My dear young lady! But is it all true, Simon?

SIMON. I heard the whole story just now from a weeping gentleman in black—in black; one of the relations, no doubt.

SOPHY. What! here?

SIMON. Here: you may tell by the tears where he stood.

SOPHY. What shall I do, Simon?

SIMON. Drop down upon your two knees, clasp both your hands, and pray that all delights and blessings may fall, thick as hailstones, on my head.

SOPHY. On your head?

SIMON. Your preserver's head! But come with me to the Lady Felicia's.

SOPHY. I—I—(*Aside.*) Oh, that I might tell him! Yet I

musn't seem afraid, else he'll never leave me. Don't I tell you that I'm come out on an errand for my master?

SIMON. An errand, for what?—speak—for what?

SOPHY. For—for—(*Aside.*) What shall I say?—For worsted.

SIMON. Worsted!

SOPHY. Yes; red worsted.

SIMON. Red worsted! Perhaps, blood-red! There's a hint of murder in the colour.

SOPHY. Simon, I don't believe any of these tales; I—there's nothing in the house that—

SIMON. If ghosts are nothing: four female ghosts—two of them with brown hair, sisters—in hoops, and playing on the harpsichord, go through every room at midnight.

SOPHY. Why, where do they come from?

SIMON. From the wine-cellar; for, on digging there eight months ago, last Tuesday, there were found four skeletons, drest in white satin, to match.

SOPHY. (*Aside.*) My poor lady! I—I don't believe a word of it!—(They'll kill her!)—I tell you, Simon, hold your tongue! You only talk to frighten me—(My sweet lady!)—Don't speak; don't come near me!—(I'll die for her!)—Let me go about my business.

SIMON. Not a foot, Sophy—not a foot without me.

Enter PURPLE.

PURP. How now, sirrah? Let the girl pass. Do you know this person, my pretty maid?

SOPHY. Never saw his face before, sir!

SIMON. What?

SOPHY. And he will plague me so; pray sir, keep him from me, sir! Thank ye sir.—(*Aside.*)—And now, to lose Simon, and then get to my dear lady!—(*runs off.*)

SIMON. Sophy! Sophy! Do you know what you've done, sir?

PURP. Tut ! let the wench go home.

SIMON. (*Aside*) This gay bird may know something of that cave. I'll swallow my anger, and—Pray, sir, do you know that house ?

PURP. Very well. Why ?

SIMON. The new housekeeper, who—

PURP. What ! Is the woman come ?

SIMON. She *is* come. Did you expect her ?

PURP. We have looked for her some days.

SIMON. (*Aside*) We ! I'm right—he's one of the gang !

PURP. You know the woman, then ?

SIMON. I think I do.

PURP. And is she a nice, comfortable creature ?

SIMON. She was this morning.

PURP. Ha ! ha ! an excellent thought ! If the lads warm quickly over the bottle, I'll bring them all away to Maynard's ; and, spite of him, make a night of it ! The housekeeper is really come, eh ? Then we'll give full employment to her, you may depend upon it ! (*Exit.*)

SIMON. I wonder the sparks don't come out of my mouth ; for, from my fingers to my toes, I glow like a blacksmith's forge. What's to be done ? I've tried poison, drowning, ghosts and all, yet with no help. I have it—I'll go back to the lady Felicia ; make her send for Sophy, marry her, and there an end. (*Looking at house.*) A pretty dwelling for a housekeeper ! I know not rightly who could take the place, unless the devil had a sister out of service. (*Exit.*)

SCENE IV.

MAYNARD'S Study.—*The room furnished with book-shelves, globes, maps, antiques, statues, &c.—A large telescope, with other astronomical and scientific instruments.*

FELICIA *discovered, arranging books and papers.*

FEL. Here I am, installed in office ! Already I have raised my philosopher's curiosity. If I can, by a mixture of simplicity and address, thicken the mystery—if I can but continue to excite his interest, until, quite bewildered, he begs the goddess to walk from forth the cloud, and—and, alas ! what then ? If I have failed to touch his heart, will he not misconstrue my boldness ? I—I almost wish I was safe at home again. Ah me ! here he comes !

Enter MAYNARD.

MAYN. Sophy ! (*Aside.*) What eyes this girl has ! This is very wrong. I told you never to enter my study. No petticoat must violate the sanctity of this retreat.

FEL. I was only putting the things to rights.

MAYN. Sophy, receive this as a solemn charge : never attempt to put anything to rights in this room—I prefer confusion.

FEL. But, sir, only look at the cobwebs and spiders.

MAYN. I'm partial to cobwebs—I encourage spiders.

FEL. But, then, the mice—they gallop about like little ponies. Why don't you keep a cat, sir ?

MAYN. A cat ! No, even in little things, I hope I am a philanthropist.

FEL. Oh ! You prefer a trap ? Yet, if learning were wisdom, your mice should be too wise to be caught.

MAYN. Too wise ! How ?

FEL. Because 'twould seem, by some of your volumes, that the mice devoured as many books as their master. (*Showing book, with its leaves half-destroyed.*)

MAYN. (*Taking book.*) Alack, poor Homer! If Pythagoras' creed were true, and every mouse were an annotator, they couldn't have used the Iliad more unmercifully. Yes, Sophy, we must do for Homer what Homer couldn't afford for himself—keep a cat. Now, go, child; I am very busy.

FEL. I won't say a word, sir.

MAYN. A word? How can I study with you here? I am going to observe a planet that—

FEL. What planet? I do so love the stars!

MAYN. Why, what can you know about the stars?

FEL. Oh! there were a great many gypsies in our parts. What planet, sir?

MAYN. Why—why Venus, so you must leave me.

FEL. La! sir, why can't you observe Venus with me in the room?

MAYN. (*Aside.*) What a whimsical creature it is! Sophy, —I—I wish thou wert old and ugly.

FEL. That's what our girls in Derbyshire used to wish;—but, bless you, it did no good. Why can't you study whilst I—(*Taking hold of one of Maynard's ruffles.*)—Look at this beautiful lace, all in holes! I tell you what—(*Taking off his ruffle.*) whilst you look at the stars, I'll sit here and darn this ruffle. (*Takes huswife from pocket; sits down, and begins to work.*)

MAYN. (*Aside.*) Now, spite of me I can't be angry. What delicate, soft fingers she has! (*Tearing his other ruffle.*) A few stitches have dropped in this. (*Holding out his wrist, Felicia takes off the ruffle.*) Yes, she may stay—

she'll not break on my abstractions. (*Looking among papers.*) Aye, here are my calculations. (*Sits.*) Here is the work of many a severe hour. Copernicus maintained —

FEL. (*At work.*) The most lovely lace, to be sure !

MAYN. Maintained this chimera,—but Tyco Brahe—

FEL. (*At work.*) Was never bought for a guinea a-yard.

MAYN. Now, Sophy, if you talk—

FEL. Talk !—I was only thinking aloud, sir.

MAYN. Destroyed this hypothesis.

FEL. (*Still working.*) Ha ! there goes another thread.

MAYN. Now, Sophy ! (*rising.*) But the night is coming on, I must to my work—(*going to telescope.*) I'll just sweep the heavens. Ha ! there's Saturn, and to night how sharply the rings are defined. (*MAYNARD continues to look through the telescope.*)

FEL. (*Working, sings in a drawling tone.*)

In one of our Derbyshire springs,
Which petrify bird, fruit and tree,
An old fairy goldsmith sold rings,
To people who wedded would be.
Alack ! well-a-day, even Cupid's light wing
May flit near the brink, but beware of the spring.

MAYN. Sophy, this is insupportable ! I cannot suffer this noise.

FEL. Noise, sir ! why, it's called music in Derbyshire.

MAYN. Then, like many travellers, it has changed its name on the road. If you breathe another syllable,—

FEL. I won't think one. I'm sure I thought to amuse you, but if—

MAYN. Will you close that pretty mouth?—Now, not a word—not even a sigh—(*again looks through the telescope.*) I never before beheld the rings so luminous.

FEL. (*sings in her natural voice.*)

“ We asked,” cry the married, “ for gold,

“ To make flesh of flesh, bone of bone ;

“ But, fairy, the ring thou hast sold,

“ Hath made of our hearts stone of stone.”

Alack !—well-a-day, even Cupid’s light wing,

May turn into flint if it dip in the spring.

MAYN. Sophy ! In a word, you must leave me. I shall never get to my task.

FEL. What ! hav’n’t you done ? I thought you’d been looking at Venus all this time ; Venus and her wedding-rings ? (*rising.*) Pray, then, let me spy at the lady : one little peep, and I won’t teaze you a minute longer. How bright the star is !—but, (*looking through glass,*) good heart ! now it seems all over spots.

MAYN. Those spots are only to be seen through an excellent glass.

FEL. Dear me ! sir, then how foolish it is in you to look at ’em.

MAYN. Why, child, ’tis that folly which makes our wisdom.

FEL. ’Tis that makes the wisdom of the very wise, old, spectacted bachelor, who spends all his life discovering flaws and blots, whilst another woos and weds, and, looking only with his natural eye, sees to the end of his days, nothing but light.

MAYN. Sophy ! these words are—

FEL. My grandmother’s ; she’d a mortal aversion to old bachelors. Oh ! there’s the moon ! Tell me ; is it true, that love is made in the moon ?

MAYN. The moon is said to be inhabited, but—

FEL. Well, I meant the same thing. And is it true, that the people have faces like melons, bodies like grasshoppers, and voices like French horns ?

MAYN. I have made no such discovery. Thou'dst better judge for thyself. (*Leads her to telescope.*) Now, what dost thou see?

FEL. (*Looking through telescope.*) Mountains of diamonds—towns of gold—churches of crystal, and—oh! dear, there's a wedding! I can hear the bells and see the white favours.

MAYN. Thy uppermost wishes may imagine them; but, truly, now, what dost thou see?

FEL. Truly,—(*Coming from the glass.*) now I see the moon bright, clear and beautiful, a world of light; and now, (*looking through glass*) by the help of this most excellent glass, it looks like—

MAYN. What?

FEL. A bowl of curds and whey;—a fine figure of all thy future experience.—For, pent up here alone, souring thyself in this dungeon, thou'lt think thou'rt discovering wondrous territories, unheard-of wealth; when, at the last, an old, wrinkled, solitary, techy bachelor, thou'lt look with the eyes of truth, and all thy wisdom will appear—mere curds and whey!

MAYN. Nay, Sophy; this is no housekeeper's speech—there is a mystery in your words, actions, looks—(*following her.*)

FEL. (*Avoiding him, and taking book from shelf.*) What! do you read Tasso?

(*Chants.*) Intanto Erminia fra l'ombrose piante
D'antica selva, dal cavallo è scorta,
Nè più governa il fren la man tremante,
E mezza quasi par tra viva e morta.

Isn't it beautiful Welch?

MAYN. Welch?

FEL. Our curate—he'd been a great traveller—taught it me for Welch!—But the stars, sir—the stars!

MAYN. Thou hast too much perplexed me for the stars.
We must—

FEL. (*Avoiding him, and placing chess-table between them.*)
What! Do you play at chess?

MAYN. Sometimes,—but—now—

FEL. An excellent thing to discipline the mind—I play a little. (*Arranging the pieces.*)

MAYN. Nay, my fair housekeeper, no evasion shall serve you. I must know your mystery.

FEL. (*Aside.*) I have gone too far. How to escape?

MAYN. (*Holding FELICIA, who struggles to get away.*)
Come, confess, who and what you really are: confess,—I must have—

(*Enter FATHER OLIVER, with a lighted lamp.*)

FEL. (*Disengaging herself.*) A light—very true, sir.—I (*getting towards the door and securing the key.*)—I have placed the pieces, sir—father Oliver is come, and—good night, sir.—(*Exit: she is heard to lock the door.*)

MAYN. Stay!—She locks the door!

OLIV. (*Rushing to door.*)—Locked! (*Aside.*) And in an instant they will be here! Destruction!—(*OLIVER and MAYNARD look confusedly at each other, and the scene closes.*)

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.—SCENE I.

A spacious Hall in the House of Maynard.

Enter FELICIA.

FELICIA. I have locked the door, and thus secured my retreat. I have been too precipitate: escape and secrecy are all I can now look for: so ends my hopeful comedy! Now, a perpetual bridle be upon my tongue, for its silly ambling! I—no, it is in vain to ponder,—home! home!—*(Approaching door: a knock.)* Can this be Benjamin? He may question—*(Another knock.)* yet I know no other outlet.—*(Opens door—SOPHY runs in.)* Sophy!

SOPHY. My dear lady, I can't help it!—scold me, never speak to me, never think of me,—I can't help it!—I couldn't stop away, I—

FEL. At such an hour, Sophy?

SOPHY. I couldn't get rid of that Simon; he watched me, and—*(Alarmed.)* Hark! don't you hear something knocking?

FEL. *(Aside.)* My prisoners above. 'Tis nothing. *(Aside.)* Yes, I may depend on her fidelity. She shall remain—'twill help the mystery.

SOPHY. *(Becoming more terrified.)* There, lady! I'm sure I heard the rustling of satin—white satin!

FEL. Sophy, be not a child; attend to me. I purpose leaving this house immediately.

SOPHY. I thank goodness you do!

FEL. Yet, to perfect my plan, 'tis necessary that you take my place.

SOPHY. I!

FEL. And more; the better to perplex Mr. Maynard, spite of all he may advance, declare that you, and you only, have been here all the time. I have locked him in his study; when I am safe away—why, Sophy, what makes you tremble and look so pale?

SOPHY. I never could bring my mind to ghosts; and though to serve you, I—I—

FEL. What has possessed you? Ghosts!

SOPHY. You don't know what a service this is. Six-and-twenty housekeepers since Michaelmas!

FEL. Sophy?

SOPHY. Sixteen took arsenic—seven went raving mad—five killed themselves like the farmer's daughter in the song,—and, for the remainder, they're to this day unaccounted for!

FEL. What idle gossip have you listened to?

SOPHY. Don't say idle, ma'am; it all came through a person in black, with weepers,—one of the brothers! I ran here to tell you,—for if the spirits—

FEL. Spirits!

SOPHY. Eight ghosts—four of 'em twin sisters, with flaxen hair down to their heels—all at midnight, go through the house,—some playing at hoop and some the harpsichord. (*A knock—Sophy shrieks, and falls on her knees, holding Felicia.*) Ha!

FEL. Silence! (*A knock.*)

SOPHY. There!

FEL. Be not so weak—so foolish. At this hour, who can it be? (*Approaching door.*)

SOPHY. (*Endeavouring to prevent her.*) Dear lady! you'll never—

(*A third knock, and VOICE without.*)

“The white rose is a pretty flower!”

SOPHY. So it is, but how droll to say so through a key-hole!

FEL. “The white rose”—“the white!”—Sophy, you have heard stories of this house!

SOPHY. It's no house—it's a large brick coffin. I'm sure, the very curtains look like winding-sheets. Stories!

FEL. “The white rose!” That man, Father Oliver,—there's craft in his looks—mystery in his words;—from France, too!—I'll see this visitor, and then decide.

SOPHY. You'll never open the door? We're poor women,—alone—with nothing but our screams!

FEL. Be calm—be silent! Our lives, perhaps the lives of others, depend on your composure. If there be danger, I will protect you at my own suffering: but dear, good Sophy, by your love for me, be still!

SOPHY. As a stone. We were born at the same time, and why shouldn't we die at the same time? They may cut me to bits, I won't so much as squeak—won't say a word. Poor Simon! (*A knock.*)

FEL. Observe, and follow me in all things.

(*A knock.—VOICE without:—“The white rose”*)—

FELICIA opens the door, when suddenly enter LAVAL, DAGUERRE, and others of the party.

LAV. and DAG. Women!

FEL. (*Aside.*) So many! If you please, good gentlemen, who do you want?

LAV. Humph! You heard us knock often—heard us speak?

FEL. Not a word.—Did you knock more than once?—We ask pardon, but, sitting by the fire, we fell fast—fast asleep. (*Yawning: SOPHY imitates her throughout the scene.*)

DAG. Faith! such pretty chimney-figures might shorten a winter's night. Why, thou'rt not yet well awake; even now, there's time to win some gloves.

FEL. (*Repulses him*) Hands—not gloves.

LAV. This must not be.—(*Aside to DAGUERRE.*) Is this a time?—(*To FELICIA.*) Father Oliver, can he not be seen?

FEL. He's busy—busy at, I think they call it, chess, with Mr. Maynard.

DAG. And Benjamin?

FEL. He is out.

DAG. Out?

FEL. Sent somewhere on an errand by the father.

SOPHY. Yes—on an errand.

FEL. Shall I tell father Oliver all you gentlemen are here?

LAV. Stay. You've pretty faces for a riband;—here is a crown each. Now, (*to FELICIA*) if unobserved by your master, you could hint to the father that some friends were waiting—

FEL. Then master mus'n't know it?

LAV. Why, now, I warrant me, you yourselves have sometimes a friend at the fireside you wouldn't have your master told of?

FEL. Yes—often.

SOPHY. Every Sunday.

LAV. 'Tis even so with father Oliver.—You understand?

FEL. Oh, yes—(*Aside*) Doubt becomes certainty. I will at every hazard, stay and watch them.—Dear heart, gentle-

men, if the father had but trusted me—had but told me you were coming to supper,—

LAV. As for supper—

FEL. I don't believe we've a drop of wine in the house.—
(*To SOPHY*) Child, run down to the cellar, and—

SOPHY. (*Alarmed—aside to FELICIA.*)—The cellar! Why, that cellar—

FEL. (*Aside to SOPHY.*) Hush! I'll see to it myself.

LAV. By no means,—we will not trouble you.

SOPHY. And I know there's not a drop.—Now I remember, I dare say, Mr. Oliver has sent out Benjamin for wine and supper too.—I shouldn't—(*A knock—SOPHY screams*) Mercy on us!

FEL. (*To SOPHY*) Art out of thy wits?—More of the company, I dare say—(*Going to door.*)

LAV. Stay; should it be any of your master's friends,—if we are seen,—

FEL. His friends! He sees nobody—hasn't a friend in the world.—(*They all retire, as FELICIA opens the door.*)

(*Enter BIN, carrying a hamper of wine.*)

Bless me—what is all this?

BIN. (*Slightly intoxicated.*) Wine, red lips; wine! If there's a corkscrew at hand, I'll tell you the quality.

FEL. But who sent it here?

BIN. A gentleman.

FEL. Art sure?

BIN. Who but a gentleman could do such things?

SOPHY. But when—and how—and who?—

BIN. My little love, my profession is the profession of a pack-horse—not to ask, or to answer, but to carry. Read the direction.—(*Offering card.*)—Am I right?

FEL. (*Preventing SOPHY—and returning card.*) It's enough

to make a body blush, sir ;—but we—we wer'n't taught to read.

BIN. No! I should have thought four such eyes could do any thing without teaching.—Well, some have beauty, some have learning. I won't brag of my beauty,—but—but—I'll read the direction. (*Reads*) “ Mr. Maynard, Birdcage”—(*looking at FELICIA and SOPHY*) very pretty birds—“ Walk, St. James's Park.” Am I right?

FEL. Quite right ; and sent here by a gentleman?

BIN. Though I didn't see him, every bottle cries, “ a gentleman.”—You hav'n't a corkscrew?

FEL. Not such a thing in the house.—There, good night.

BIN. Good night.—(*Pauses—comes down between them.*) Yet, I have a serious word to say to you.

FEL. and SOPHY. To us!

BIN. Something about your future peace of mind.

FEL. Well?—(*Both FELICIA and SOPHY listen anxiously. DAGUERRE and LAVAL are seen listening at back.*)

BIN. You are young, very pretty, and may get husbands. Now—are you attending?

BOTH. Yes—yes.

BIN. It's worth attention ; for it's something come to my mind from the dreadful state of this house. If you would have your husbands—for I know what men are,—if you would have your husbands love, worship, honour and respect you,—never, never—

BOTH. Never?—

BIN. Never be without a corkscrew!

SOPHY. Is that all?

BIN. Don't shun good advice. I feel I speak as a father ; for if I'd twenty marrying daughters, these should be my solemn words to each—“ Never be without a corkscrew!”

(FELICIA sees BIN out at door.—LAVAL, DAGUERRE, &c. shew themselves,)

FEL. You see, gentlemen, father Oliver has not forgotten you. Benjamin—

LAV. But may not this be sent to your master? May he not expect friends?

FEL. Wine for master—wine for fishes; they'd as soon drink it. And for friends, they're all upon his bookshelves. No: this is all Benjamin's doing, and like him; he's so sly and close, he won't trust any body; else I'd have had all things to rights. But come, Sophy!

LAV. How long have you been servant here?

FEL. Housekeeper, sir.—Not long; this (*pointing to SOPHY*) is my cousin: the place is so dull she came to sit with me. But we won't talk now. Sophy, here, take the wine into that room.—(*Giving her two of the bottles—Aside to her.*)—Be prudent—be calm! That room—the gentlemen will follow you.

LAV. In, gentlemen.

SOPHY. (*Endeavouring to conceal her terror.*)—This way, if you please.—(*Two of the party take up the hamper.*)—Thank ye, gentlemen; this—(*Aside*)—I can't speak—I feel as if I'd a wet feather drawn about my throat;—this way, sirs;—(*to FELICIA*)—you'll come directly, cousin? Gentlemen,—this—dear Simon!—(*She goes off, curtsying, and surrounded by conspirators.*)

LAV. Now, my pretty maid—father Oliver.

FEL. I'll run directly.

LAV. Caution.

FEL. Bless you, I know how to cheat master.—(*Going—comes back.*) I say, if when he is sound asleep, we could have a little dance?

LAV. It may be—but quick.

FEL. You promise then?—I'll go.—(*Aside.*) I see it all; conspiracy—treason! At any venture he must be saved. Now, mind, 'tis a bargain between us?—A dance—when he's asleep, you know, a little dance? (*Exit.*)

DAG. Must we decide? Is this our last meeting?

LAV. The last: Layer has his men ready—all our friends are staunch; father Oliver has received King James's declaration of right to the English crown; he is to-night to read it to us, and furnish copies for secret circulation.

DAG. I could have liked some other place of rendezvous. Is not this house too near the court?

LAV. In that lies our safety. In matters such as ours the boldest conduct is the surest. Whilst they look abroad for treason, we securely spring the mine beneath their feet. Come. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.

Maynard's Study.—MAYNARD and OLIVER discovered, playing at chess.

OLIV. (*With suppressed anxiety—listening.*) There!—surely it is her foot on the staircase!

MAYN. I was wont to have a nice ear for such music—yet I distinguish nothing. Tut! why should we listen? The move, father—the move! Have a care; or, pupil as I am, you'll lose. Come! when it is her good pleasure to unlock the door, the door will be unlocked. Why, father, I shall fain think thou hast missed some delicate appointment.

OLIV. Sir!

MAYN. Thou dost take this girlish frolic so gravely.

Have we not sat whole nights at the game ; and now, half an hour wearies you ?

OLIV. I am moved that a servant should presume—

MAYN. Poor thing! 'tis her simplicity.—(*Aside.*)—I would she'd come ! All my senses are in a whirl ! Her eye has such inborn intelligence—her voice, so expressive in its sweet depth—her hands—her step!—nothing is vulgar, yet nothing artificial. Who can she be ? Well,—time, time ! Now, father.

OLIV. You play well, sir—very well.—(*Playing.*)

MAYN. Not so. (*Playing.*) You are too easy with me.

OLIV. No, indeed ; you now send me to my studies. (*Aside.*) I can scarce master myself ! At so nice a moment, —if they come—and the girl,—(*Catches the eye of MAYNARD, and returns to the play.*)

MAYN. Nay, you cast the game away. See !

OLIV. I told you, I must now learn of you. Ha !

MAYN. What ! You spy the victory ?

OLIV. No, I—yes, I think I see the game (*Aside.*) She is here.

Enter FELICIA at door.

FEL. (*to MAYN.*) Did you ring, sir ?

MAYN. Sophy ! (*Aside.*) My breath flies away at her voice. Yes, yes, I rang. (*Aside.*) Now, to lose the game, and get him away.

OLIV. (*Aside.*) I dare not leave them alone ; I must first know,—they whisper ! Is she really so simple ? Are they come ? Can accident ?—Befall what may, I am armed, and, gone so far, will leave no point to chance !

MAYN. Now, father ? (*Aside.*) Plague on his hesitation !

OLIV. You never showed such skill.

MAYN. I see—it will be tedious: we will resume to-morrow. (*Rising.*)

OLIV. Your pardon—I shall beat you now. (*Playing.*)

MAYN. (*Aside.*) Is there no way of losing? (*Playing.*) There!

FEL. (*Who stands at the table, to MAYNARD, at the same time casting an inquiring glance at OLIVER.*) Ha! your king's in danger!

OLIV. (*Starting.*) What?—(*FELICIA points, with an air of simplicity, to SIDNEY's play.*) True! (*aside.*) Yet could she speak another meaning? I am prepared.—(*Narrowly observing MAYNARD, and half-rising from his chair, as he plays.*) That was bold play; I move thus, and—

FEL. (*Rapidly moving a piece on the board.*)—Checkmate! (*OLIVER confused, sinks in his chair—FELICIA, forcing a laugh.*) Ha! ha! Sir, you have missed the game.

MAYN. Excellent! Why, Sophy, where did you learn chess?

FEL. Chess! La, I've been tired of it many a night.—A lady down with us—an old lady from the Indies—taught me chess to keep her company.

OLIV. Indeed!

FEL. Poor soul! she was rheumatic and bed-ridden, and 'twas her only comfort. Chess, chess, chess; I used to sit day after day, night after night, that—I declare, even now, I can't look at these tiresome bits of bone without yawning.

MAYN. For the first time they have wearied me. Father, good night; I shall read for an hour or less, and then, to-bed. (*Seats himself at table, takes book, and impatiently matches FELICIA.*)—Good night.

FEL. (*Taking candle from table, and affecting to light it for OLIVER.—(Aside to him.)*)—They are come.

OLIV. They !

FEL. (*Aside to him.*) Don't be afraid, they've made a friend of me ; I'm the last to tell tales of a fellow-servant.

OLIV. Tales !

FEL. Why should masters know every thing ? You have your friends to sup one night ; I'll have mine another.

OLIV. Oh ! then they owned they came to sup ?

FEL. But I vowed not to tell master ;—we're to have a dance, and—come along, we'll be so merry !

MAYN. Sophy, wait, I have a word to say to you.

FEL. To me, sir ? (*aside to OLIVER.*) I'll get away from him directly.

OLIV. He may follow.

FEL. (*Aside to OLIVER.*) He sha'n't ; for if't must be, I'll once more turn the lock.

MAYN. Sophy !

FEL. I never did see such a candle—Yes, sir.—(*Giving light to OLIVER.*) Good night, sir. (*Aside to him.*) I'll come directly. (*Curtseying him to door.*) Sweet rest to you, sir.

OLIV. (*Aside*) Yet, I'll make sure, and quickly send them hence. Sir, good night. (*Exit at door.*)

MAYN. (*Running from the table, and embracing FELICIA.*) And now, confess, fair mystery ! or I'll put your lips to the torture.

FEL. Confess, sir ! What, have you lost any thing ?

MAYN. Yes, in faith—lost myself !

FEL. Lud ! you frightened me ! I feared you had missed some of the spoons !

MAYN. (*Holding her.*) Your history, my beautiful enigma ! Disclose ! I'd fain be merciful, yet have I strange thoughts of cruelty !

FEL. I am—I am your prisoner.

MAYN. So! then the gaoler may take his fees.

FEL. (*Glancing at door.*) Hath the turnkey done his office?

MAYN. (*Locking and barring door.*) As wise as fair.

FEL. Is't fast? Art sure that we are—

MAYN. The Cyclops, with their hammers, could not force it. And now, with such a guard, let bliss—(*She avoids him*)—Nay, this morning, I was a dull, blind student—a man of marble; but thou hast fired the statue into life, and now I am—

FEL. (*Repelling him, and with energy.*) A gentleman!—still a gentleman!

MAYN. (*Aside.*) This is not art; no, the mind gives a sterner beauty to her face. Her eye is clear and cold as starlight; and her lip, so sudden white; speaks in its paleness. Tears! (*Approaching her respectfully.*) As you say, I hope, still a gentleman—nay more, a gentleman, so frozen by your reproof, that I fear, even Cupid's bow and arrows, kindled for firewood, might fail to thaw me.

FEL. (*Aside.*) Shall I tell all? I feel as yet, I dare not—His rashness might destroy him; first let them quit the house, and then—

MAYN. (*Placing chairs.*) Sit, Sophy—(*They sit.* FELICIA endeavours to control her anxiety.) Now, you have some history?

FEL. Who has not?

MAYN. Your's should be happiness. Might I write the future, trust me it should be blithe.

FEL. Indeed?

MAYN. Indeed. (*Aside.*) How her voice winds into my heart! Your coming here, is it not some jest—some desire to laugh at me? Surely, fortune never drove you hither?

FEL. It was my fortune.

MAYN. Impossible. Come, own it was a frolic? You were set on? No? Your friends—I mean, your parents, know they not —?

FEL. At nine years old I was an orphan.

MAYN. Poor Sophy! so far our present fates accord. I am myself a solitary thing, without a single relative.

FEL. Without one?

MAYN. Without one.

FEL. Not one?

MAYN. Stay—I believe I have a cousin; but cousins, you know, go for nothing?

FEL. True.

MAYN. Still, your history? I listen, as I would hear a tale of fairy land. Your parents dead, there must be, at least some one, to whom you owe a debt?

FEL. Oh, yes! A deep, dear debt. I was a careless child when it was contracted, yet did the obligation make me, as with a charm, a thoughtful creature. To this hour no day has passed that I have not remembered it—loved it—held myself the richer that I owed it,—would not have cancelled it for all the power of queens!

MAYN. (*Aside.*) What eloquent sweetness! Your creditor was paid, with a dear usury, in such thoughts. Such a debtor must——

FEL. I fear he never thought of her.

MAYN. He! he! (*Aside.*) But now, I was a flame; and that monosyllable hath turned me into lead. Why should it—what is it to me? (*Looking round.*) Curse the place, it never looked such a dungeon. I—that little word has damnable magic! I seem to read nothing but *he*,—the very busts are opening their stony mouths to cry *he*! Well, Sophia?

FEL. Sophia?

MAYN. Sophy—still Sophy. You, it seems, have not forgotten? You love him—him—yet?

FEL. I have not forgotten:

MAYN. Do not forget—but do not love.

FEL. Why not?

MAYN. For my sake, do not.

FEL. Your sake?

MAYN. I love you!

FEL. Sidney!—Sir.

MAYN. Love you with honour.—Will, for I feel it is my fate, give up all for you.

FEL. What? Your books?

MAYN. For that rarer volume, your loving heart.

FEL. Your telescopes?

MAYN. For that diviner light, your loving eyes: in that I'll hourly read, in them I'll gaze, and make the best happiness the truest wisdom.

FEL. You know not all my history?

MAYN. No,—but know enough.

FEL. It may be a riddle.

MAYN. I'll marry you, trusting to that fair face for a clear solution.

FEL. Indeed, I may deceive you.

MAYN. Then truth is but a sound. Deceit is in the world: I have found it, found it so fair, it well nigh made me sceptical of all beside. Yet, at the fairest, was it no more to the spirit shining through you, than is the light of fens to the pure and lasting diamond. I—were I to talk whole days, I could say no more than this,—but in it say my heart and soul,—I love you, Sophy—I love you! (*Falling on his knee.*)

(*Violent knocking at door.*)

PURP. (*without.*) Good father solitary! Monsieur Unit! open the door!

FEL. (*In great agitation.*) They are here! For your life, do not—pray do not! (*knocking.*)

MAYN. Tom Purple! What mad intrusion!

FEL. (*Aside.*) I should have prepared him—my fears, no my selfishness hath ruined all!

PURP. (*Without.*) Open, Sir Eremite! I charge ye, by your iron girdle, death's head, and cross-bones, lift the latch, and let poor pilgrims in!

MAYN. (*To Felicia.*) Do not tremble—do not fear—he is a friend.

FEL. Oh no, for my sake, do not trust him;—from yonder window, is there no escape?

MAYN. Escape? Nay, Sophy, I feel the delicacy of your fears. Retire into yonder room: 'tis father Oliver's; a few minutes will rid me of him. He is, I say, a friend—a tried, noble friend.

FEL. Is he known to father Oliver?

MAYN. Known; but I fear me, little esteemed.

PURP. (*Knocking without.*) What! friar Bacon, if dumb thyself, let thy brazen head discourse!

MAYN. In, Sophy, in! (*He puts her in room at upper side, she anxiously watches at door.*)

PURP. (*Without.*) Sidney Maynard! Sidney! (*SIDNEY opens door, when enter PURPLE, intoxicated, holding FATHER OLIVER—FELICIA glides into balcony.*)

PURP. So! your hospitable door hath well nigh stripped my knuckles.

MAYN. Nay, Tom, at this time! What could have brought you here? (*During the following, FELICIA is seen to enter the room, and at intervals to appear watching and listening at the door.*)

PURP. Your house-warming. There are a few friends—

MAYN. Now, Tom, go home; my house is in no state for guests.

PURP. I knew your poverty and prepared for it. I sent such a hamper!—There's wine enough below to make a bath for Bacchus and Ariadne!

MAYN. Indeed, you perplex me!—I am not furnished with—

PURP. (*Holding OLIVER, who endeavours to get away.*) No! Of course you don't drink, but you shall stop and draw the corks.

OLIV. (*Aside.*) By this time they must be from the house.—All I see is safe with him.

MAYN. Seriously, Purple, what could bring you here?

PURP. Your housekeeper! I wrote to Derbyshire for a Sibyl; and—ha! ha!—up comes a Flora.

MAYN. Surely, you have not seen —?

PURP. Seen her and heard her!—And then her lips!

MAYN. Lips!

PURP. Oh, hay-fields and a murmuring brook!

MAYN. Lips! You did not forget —?

PURP. Certainly not: I kissed her of course.

MAYN. Kissed!—And she—?

PURP. Acknowledged the attention.—(*To OLIVER.*) No, you don't stir.—Never look so grim, Sid! There are fourteen rare lads—they'll all be here.

MAYN. Here!

PURP. I wouldn't take you by surprise—I ran on and left 'em to follow—they'll—(*Voices are heard below.*) Huzza! Here they are!—(*Voices below sing and shout.*)

MAYN. Purple, this vexes me!—I insist—Father—tell the gentlemen, I am out—in bed—cannot see them.

VOICES (*without.*)—Mr. Maynard!—Mr. Maynard!—Is he home?

FEL. (*Looking over the balcony.*) Yes, gentlemen;—yes!—

PURP. (*Seeing FELICIA.*) What! Another woman! and—(*To SIDNEY.*)—"I am making certain calculations, and to-night Venus will"—Oh, my dear Mogul!

MAYN. Pshaw! This young person is the housekeeper—the same you—kissed.

PURP. No—that young person's below!

MAYN. Below!

FEL. Yes—she's my cousin.

MAYN. So, Sophy, you have some relations?

FEL. No, sir,—for you know, cousins go for nothing.

MAYN. (*Aside.*) I am lost in doubt and—(*Noise without.*)

PURP. (*Going to balcony.*) Wait a minute, brave lads; good fellows; rare boys!—The door shall be opened.

FEL. It shall not. Mr. Purple, let me have some authority in my own house.

PURP. Have the purest despotism; I have the key.—(*shewing it.*) Oh, I was no sooner master of the citadel than I secured the gates.—No soul comes in or departs without the new governor's permission!

OLIV. (*Aside.*) 'Sdeath!—they are still here, then.

FEL. (*Aside.*) Happy adventure!—He is safe.

PURP. I ran against old sanctity, here, coming to the door, and brought him up for fear of any trick.—(*Noise without.*) I'm coming lads.

MAYN. Mr. Purple, I wish to hold your friendship: that I may do so, I insist on privacy.

FEL. (*To SIDNEY.*) La, sir, why not let the gentlemen come in?

PURP. Hearken to wisdom! There are but fourteen.

FEL. To be sure, had we known, we might have been prepared.—(*Aside to SIDNEY.*) Let them enter.—Still, we can manage very nicely.

PURP. Hear her, Sidney; hear her! Every word's a jewel.—(*knocking without.*) I'm coming, lads; I'm coming.—Mr. Maynard, I wish to keep your friendship, but I must—yes, I must—keep the key.—Ha! ha! Coming lads.—(*knocking without. Exit.*)

MAYN. This must not pass. Father, follow me.

FEL. Nay, let the gentlemen enter.

MAYN. Would it give you so much satisfaction? Would it be—oh, Sophy! Come, sir! (*Exit, taking with him FATHER OLIVER.*)

FEL. Yet he is saved! These papers, found in my hurried search in that room, declare all;—a treasonable correspondence with the Pretender! How to dispose of them? If the men leave the house, some after circumstance may implicate Maynard: if secured by his means, and with them these proofs, his innocence is placed beyond all question. I will declare to him his danger: the visitors, so happily arrived, are numerous. Stay! could I but convey these proofs! (*Looking from balcony.*) Ha! I cannot mistake—'tis Simon! He sees me! (*Leaning over balcony.*) Good fellow, hasten—for life or death is in your speed—to the guard-house; present these papers (*throwing out packet.*)—not a word,—but fly! He is gone! Still, there may be other documents! Yet—yet an instant. (*Exit into room.*)

SCENE III.

Apartment in the house of Maynard. Door in scene and at the sides. Enter SOPHY and WIDOW DUCKLING.

SOPHY. Dear me! Mrs. Duckling, who'd have looked for such treatment from your old sweetheart, the exciseman? What reason could he give?

WIDOW. Reason! I'll tell you. We had courted, as you know, for ten years. For ten years, every evening had he smoked and drunk at my fireside, his dear little piebald poney tied up at the garden gate. Well! so we went on, as you know, until I was sent for to London. And then, didn't my gentleman come galloping to me?—and didn't he, taking hold of my hand, with his face the colour of starch,—didn't he beg, and groan, that I'd consent? My heart wasn't a cinder, child; I said I'd marry the fellow.

SOPHY. What else could you do, you know?

WIDOW. I invited all my gossips—hired a fiddle—made the wedding-cake. The morning came! Oh, you should have seen me drest! Well, we waited and waited, and no bridegroom. I sat on nettles for two hours. At last,—

SOPHY. The exciseman came?

WIDOW. No; but he sent a little scapegrace boy to say—what do you think?—to say he had inquired about my property!

SOPHY. La! what did you say?

WIDOW. I said nothing. I thought the waggon might move him so I took my place. Would you believe it, the villain let me come off?

SOPHY. And never followed you?

WIDOW. Not a step: for all I sat down at the tail of the

waggon, and for three whole days, eating nothing but my wedding-cake, I watched and watched for the least glimpse of a piebald nag. Oh! if my dear first husband knew how I'd been served 'twould bring the dear man from his grave.

SOPHY. It's a good thing he doesn't know it.

WIDOW. It is a blessed thing! Oh, Sophy, while you live, despise the man who inquires about your property. But tell me, child, this is a nice place, isn't it? You'll give it up, quietly, because 'twas all a mistake?

SOPHY. Give it up? that I will!

WIDOW. I came away, early as it was, directly I got down at the Talbot, and—(*Laughing within.*) Dear me! there are those rakish gentlemen, who met me in the Park, and when I asked them for this house, said they were going to it, and brought me here.

SOPHY. (*Aside.*) Where can my dear lady be? (*They retire.*)

Enter MAYNARD, PURPLE, and two Gentlemen.

MAYN. Gentlemen, I repeat, this visit is ill-timed. I would be alone.

PURP. My dear Maynard, you are alone. There was a fine body of fourteen, but you kept 'em so long at the door, they dwindled away, and now you have nothing but the skeleton. To think the dogs should have skulked away in this fashion!

1st. GENT. Shameful! All of 'em married, too. A bachelor may have his reasons for slipping off; but a married man, who knows the worst—it's pusillanimous. Where's the wine?

PURP. (*To SOPHY.*) Come, pretty one,—where's the hamper?

SOPHY. Why, sir, your friends—that is, Mr. Oliver's friends—

MAYN. Mr. Oliver's friends! Whom mean you?

SOPHY. The gentlemen—(what shall I say?)—in that room.

MAYN. In that room?

PURP. (*Looking through key-hole of door in scene.*) A snug party of some dozen, i'faith! We'll join 'em.

MAYN. Stay. I know not what to think: I will myself question him. Purple, go with your friends into that apartment. (*WIDOW DUCKLING curtsies to MAYNARD.*) Pshaw! Take with you these women. (*PURPLE and gentlemen take SOPHY and WIDOW into room.*) Be attentive—I may need you! A hundred former thoughts rush back upon me: words, looks, gestures, now considered, are grounds of strong suspicion.

(*Enter FELICIA.*)

Sophy!

FEL. You are betrayed! Your life, your honour in peril. Where are your friends?

MAYN. In that room.

(*FATHER OLIVER is coming from room in scene: when he pauses on seeing them.*)

FEL. At this moment, there are traitors beneath your roof: they, if you would clear yourself, must be secured. I have proofs, written proofs of treason! Father Oliver—

(*OLIVER having beckoned DAGUERRE, LAVAL, and others from the inner room: they stand with drawn swords.*)

OLIV. Demands them!

FEL. Ha! (*Rushes into opposite room: OLIVER and all are following, when MAYNARD throws himself before the door.*)

MAYN. Villains!

OLIV. Gentlemen, an accident—a fatality shall I call it—has disclosed our plans. Yet, be firm, and we are safe. Mr. Maynard, we must secure that woman.

MAYN. I am unarmed ; but not, whilst I have life shall you lay hand upon her !

LAV. Shall we have your friendship ? Cry, long live king James ! and join us.

MAYN. Traitors !

OLIV. We lose precious time : force that door.

MAYN. Villains. Help ! (*The party struggle with SIDNEY, and drag him from the door : PURPLE and gentlemen are overpowered as they enter. SIDNEY is mastered by two of the conspirators, who stand over him, with their swords, when FELICIA enters from room and falls upon his neck.*)

FEL. Cousin !

MAYN. Cousin !

OLIV. Gentlemen, we are your masters : be wise, we will not abuse our power. (*to FELICIA.*) His cousin are you ? I see it all—you love him. Give up those papers ; or before he can speak a prayer, he is a dead man.

MAYN. Felicia ! dear Felicia, never ! I can die ; live you, and bear witness to my honour.

PURP. Rascals ! my ghost shall be at Tyburn on your hanging day.

OLIV. Gentlemen, your swords at his throat ! Now, those papers !

FEL. (*Aside.*) I cannot save him ! I have lost the means.

OLIV. Shall we strike ?—the word ?

MAYN. Fear not for me, Felicia ; save yourself.

OLIV. That may not be so easy. Mr. Maynard, our stake is no child's play : if she remain obstinate, she too may suffer.

MAYN. You cannot mean it? Murder, in cold blood—assassinate a woman? Are ye gentlemen—are ye human creatures? Kill me—torture me—strike every sword here through me—I yield myself to your most malicious cruelty!—But, if ye have one tender thought, one hope, one grace of manhood,—hurt not my cousin,—touch not my sweet, sweet Felicia!

OLIV. Will she give the papers?

MAYN. No!—(*They are about to strike*).

FEL. Yes: I will give them.

OLIV. Where are they?

FEL. I—(*Aside*.) what shall I say—I have them not here.

OLIV. Where are they?

FEL. There!—

[*An OFFICER, with a party of soldiers with fixed bayonets, enters from room at side, conspirators throw down their swords.*]

OFFICER. (*To MAYNARD, PURPLE and GENTLEMEN.*) You, gentlemen, although the situation in which I find you is proof sufficient of your innocence, may yet be called upon for further explanation. For these traitors, secure and remove them. (*OLIVER, and the rest of his party are guarded off.*)

MAYN. To what blessed chance do we owe this rescue?

Enter SIMON BOX.

SIMON. To the lady Felicia and myself. I have watched your house, nearly all night: for, to say the truth, I liked not its looks. I was staring at yonder window, when my lady here saw me, cast out the papers and—but I forget—I have two prisoners of my own in this room: one is lawful plunder, and I'll run and take possession. (*Exit.*)

PURP. Maynard, in my sober senses, I wish you joy.

MAYN. (*To FELICIA.*) And you are my cousin?

FEL. Knew you not the little girl, whom eight years ago you snatched from out the river?

MAYN. Happy diver, to have brought up such a pearl!

(*Enter SIMON BOX and SOPHY.*)

But who is this—a cousin too?

FEL. She is my earliest, my truest friend. It is to her I owe the scheme that brought me hither. 'Twas she who was to keep your house.

Enter WIDOW DUCKLING.

WID. A little mistake, sir; I am the person, and I can tell you the whole story.

MAYN. Another time; I can hear no stories now: I can only wonder.

FEL. (*Aside to her.*) Sophy, take back your ring—and with it for your truth and service—competence.

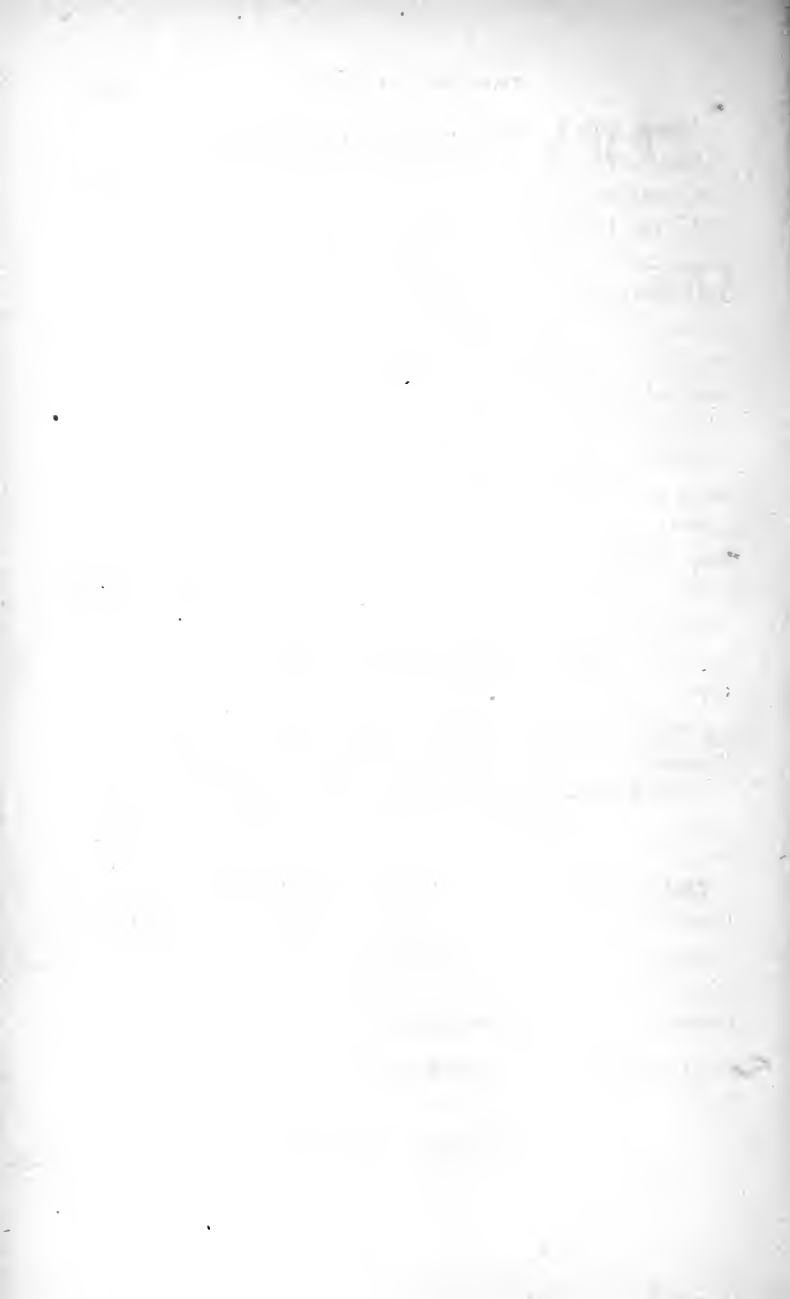
SOPHY. Dear lady, if you would but keep that gown and cap!

MAYN. Keep them! I'll have them placed within a crystal shrine, for bachelors to make a pilgrimage to honour.

WIDOW. But, sweet sir—here is the letter from London to our curate—you will see that I am the person to keep your house.

MAYN. You shall not wholly lose your journey; but there is another lady, who, as I hope, will have the place you were to fill; if she look yes—(*looking to FELICIA*)—why, then, be all welcome to my house-warming; for here, behold my wife—the best HOUSEKEEPER!

CURTAIN.







U. C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



C043146253

